



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

MAY 09 2019

Center for Democracy & Technology
1401 K St NW Ste 200
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mana Azarmi,

This is in response to your May 1, 2019 letter concerning the media's reporting of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) targeting of reporters, attorneys, and advocates at the Southwest Border. We have recently completed our review of this matter. Please allow me to outline our findings.

In October of 2018, the threat level of the Central American migrant caravan in Mexico reached higher than normal levels, they demonstrated violent tendencies, and presented transportation, medical, and housing demands to the Government of Mexico.

To address these developing threats, CBP partnered with the Government of Mexico and other law enforcement agencies. CBP was also investigating possible violations under 8 U.S. Code § 1324, which pertains to any person who encourages or induces an alien to enter the United States, knowing or in reckless disregard that they are doing so in violation of law. A number of journalists and photographers were identified by Mexican Federal Police as possibly assisting migrants in crossing the border illegally and/or as having some level of participation in the violent incursion events. Imperial Beach Border Patrol Station Agents were attacked multiple times by caravan groups on the border attempting to illegally cross.

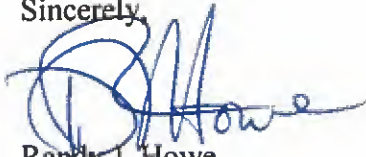
CBP utilized varied sources of information in assessing the intentions of the caravan upon their arrival in Tijuana, Mexico. These varied sources of information helped identify a number of people involved in assisting migrants in crossing the border illegally or having witnessed the violent actions taken against law enforcement at the border. CBP followed through with appropriate investigatory queries and compiled caravan information from various sources to determine if subsequent investigation was warranted. Efforts to gather this type of information are a standard law enforcement practice. CBP does not target journalists for inspection based on their occupation or their reporting. CBP has policies in place that prohibit discrimination against arriving travelers and has specific provisions regarding encounters with journalists.

It is important to note CBP is tasked with protecting our Nation's borders as well as enforcing numerous laws at our Nation's ports of entry on behalf of a variety of other government agencies, including state and local law enforcement. All international travelers attempting to enter the United States, including all U.S. citizens, are subject to examination upon each arrival into this country. Occasionally, CBP may inconvenience law-abiding persons in our efforts to

detect, deter, and mitigate threats to our homeland. We rely on the patience, cooperation, and understanding of travelers to ensure the effective protection of our borders.

If you should need further assistance, please contact my office at (202) 344-1850.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randy J. Howe". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the beginning and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Randy J. Howe
Executive Director
Office of Field Operations